



Families First & Foremost

A newsletter with children and families in mind

Fall 2001 Issue

Meet Our New Slogan

Soon, when you see the name F3 you'll also see the words "Some Things Do Change." We think this slogan captures the spirit of positive growth and challenge to the status quo that is at the root of F3's philosophy. In some cases, the motto will appear in English and be accompanied

by translations in other languages, including Spanish, Arabic, and Vietnamese. So not only will we all get foreign language lesson, we'll be able to let even more people that some things do change—and F3 is leading the way.

Some Things Do Change.

Helping the community
work together to better
meet the mental health
needs of families and
their children.



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Youth Assessment Center Planning Update

The planning of the youth assessment center continues at a very rapid and productive pace. A planning team has convened to formulate our goals, create a mission statement and define the Assessment Center's management structure. We have also implemented a management task force group that is developing both policies and procedures and defining the intake process for youth and families requiring Assessment Center services.

We are also working to implement an information management system for the Assessment Center and the different agencies working with the Center. A recommendation has been made on a software provider and once this system is activated we anticipate a greatly improved ability to share and disseminate information within the

system of care for youth in Lancaster County.

Right now we are also concentrating on the evaluation process a youth will undergo once he or she is in the Assessment Center. We have assembled yet another task force to develop this process and progress is being made every day.

This progress is the result of the time and expertise of family members and juvenile justice professionals who are sitting down at the table together. We have come a long way and all signs point to a successful opening of the Assessment Center in the coming months.

If you are interested in helping with the planning of the Assessment Center, want to inquire about job opportunities, or would just like more information about the Assessment Center, please call Gus Hitz at 441-3800.

Introducing Jeri Johns

Hi, I'm Jeri Johns.

I'm an employee of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), but now my worksite is at F3 where I am the HHS part of the Office of Juvenile Services (OJS) Evaluations. I've been with HHS for 18 years and held a variety of positions including case manager for ADC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, Child Protective Services, Foster Care, Resource Development, Community Development Specialist, Volunteer Coordinator and now HHS Evaluation Coordinator for OJS.

I have three grown children (two sons and a daughter), and two grandchildren (a 10 year old grandson and a 4 year old granddaughter), all of whom live in Lincoln. My mother, who has Alzheimer's, lives with me. As busy as my family keeps me, I still find time for church, cross stitch, making porcelain dolls and reading.



Introducing Lori Synhorst

Hi! I'm Lori Synhorst. I have joined the staff of F3 as an office assistant and am training to work with the Office of Juvenile Services for Kim Green while she is on maternity leave.

I worked for Lincoln Public Schools for the last 13 years and am looking

forward to the new challenges here at F3. When I'm not at work, you can find my husband Paul and me following our two boys (Andrew, age 16, and David, age 13) from soccer game to soccer game.



Reintroducing Kimberly Green

I'm Kimberly Green and I am now the OJS evaluation coordinator for F3. For the past year, I have been the Intake Coordinator for F3's Wraparound Program. As OJS evaluation coordinator, my primary responsibilities involve

arranging court ordered mental health evaluations for adjudicated youth in the Southeast

Service Area (Lancaster County and 16 surrounding counties). Before working with F3, I was the Intake Probation Officer with District 20 Probation in Lincoln. I am married, have a 2 1/2 year-old daughter, and am expecting my second child any day.



School Based Wraparound

Joey was fourth grade student at a Lincoln elementary school who had significant difficulties with learning and behavior. He was struggling in most of his academic courses and not getting along with his peers and staff. The school had tried traditional methods of dealing with his disruptive behavior and academic shortcomings, but they were unsuccessful. With the introduction of school-based wraparound, a family driven, multi-agency team approach was created. The approach was strength-based, focused on family needs, and included a number of formal and informal supports within the community. As the team worked together, Joey's behavior and academic performance began to improve. Through monthly meetings at the school, the team met to identify the strengths and needs of the family. Services and resources were developed to accentuate Joey's artistic strength and his mother's desire to gain employment. As these needs were met, Joey's academic and social performance improved. Joey is now performing at grade level and his mom is gainfully employed.

The above is just one example of how school-based wraparound programs can effectively serve youth with behavioral problems and their families. We are excited to announce the implementation of school-based wraparound programs in Lancaster County. By extending the wrap-around process into schools, we have increased our access to well-trained staff and to supportive services. In addition, working within the schools has brought wraparound services closer to the

communities in which children reside.

A number of community and school-based care coordinators received training on the wrap-around process from our consultant Mary Grealish. Training lasted three days and the coordinators learned the key elements of the wraparound process. Administrators, principals, and staff of Lincoln Public Schools have been very excited and highly supportive of the wraparound process being implemented in their schools. Currently, 10 to 12 families are being served in each school location. The participating schools include the following:

- **Clinton Elementary School**

Principal - Dr. Margaret Walker
Care Coordinator - Tami Rembolt

- **Hartley Elementary School**

Principal - Ms. Aletia Nissen
Care Coordinator - Angela Gebhardt

- **Huntington Elementary School**

Principal - Dr. Pam Sedlacek
Care Coordinator - Michaela Kriz

- **Culler Middle School**

Principal - Dr. Ross Dirks
Care Coordinator - Mark Cidlik

- **Dawes Middle School**

Principal - Ms. Carmel Sheppard
Care Coordinator - Jenni Hagen

- **Northeast High School**

Principal - Mr. Vern Fisher
Care Coordinator - Kelli Houlihan

Families Inspiring Families

Invitation to families

This organization is for parents and family members of children with severe emotional disorders. We are part of the Region V area that serves Lincoln and southeast Nebraska. Currently Families First & Foremost is the financial conduit for FIF.

Families joined together for the first Family Organization meeting on March 22, 2001. We brainstormed, set ground rules, and decided to meet once a month. We discussed what we wanted to include in our mission and agreed on

the following points:

- ~ Families will come together to offer support in a positive relationship
- ~ We offer a chance for families to network with each other and find solutions to challenges
- ~ Families come together to offer hope and health
- ~ Families know best what they need
- ~ We know how to support each other
- ~ We use the resources we have, find the resources we need to help our families, and continue to expand these resources in the community

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Healthy Families Project Update

The last few months have been an exciting time for Healthy Families Project. The family supports that we've been planning over the past six months have been put into action.

Since the last newsletter, we completed our survey questionnaires. To determine what services are provided for youth and families in Lancaster County, we sent out surveys to over 100 service providers and have been busily compiling the information we received back. We have been pleased by both the responses we are getting from providers and the services they told us about, which we will now be able to pass along to families. We have now begun to take phone calls from families that call F3 and are providing those families with all the resource information that is available to us.

Support Groups

Our planned supports began with co-facilitated support groups, which consisted of an HFP family member, youth or parent and professional or staff member together.

Additionally, we now have both a youth and a parent support group at Bryan LGH West. Both groups are developmental-mental health.

We are also beginning our support group for parents at CenterPointe. This group will support families who have youth with substance abuse problems.

All support groups being developed by Healthy Families Project are available and open to support families in the community who need help. They are also intended to support service providers and fill a need within the community.

Detention Center

We have completed our work with the Detention Center on Family Friendly policy changes and are planning to conduct surveys with families to measure the effectiveness of those changes. We also developed a Family Friendly staff training program with the Detention Center and began that training in October.

Cedars Youth Services

We have been working with Cedars Youth Services to plan our first family conference.

We hope this will be an ongoing project. Our goal is to reach out to all families having problems and offer them our family supports as well as professional and community resources and supports.

Mentoring-Advocacy Program

The next project we've been working on is our Mentoring-Advocacy Program, which will include peer mentoring and advocacy for both youths and parent/guardians. We are nearing completion of our training program and making our program available to both the wraparound programs and the community service providers. We will soon begin the survey and application process to build our list of mentors and advocates. We will be offering everything from transportation and respite supports and guidance to tutoring and assistance at meetings, IEPs, court and hospitals.

Wraparound

Healthy Families Project and the Family Advocates at F3 recently participated in a wraparound seminar conducted by pioneer wraparound facilitator Mary Grealish, PhD. We also did a separate day of training along with Melissa Davis Schmidt on wraparound, sharing personal stories from families and discussing the benefits of family supports along with wraparound.

Washington Bound

Last but not least, Healthy Families Project and the Family Advocates recently submitted a proposal to the Federation of Families in Washington D.C. We were excited beyond words two weeks ago when we received the message that we had been accepted to give a presentation in December. We will all be going to Washington, D.C. to discuss the unique cultures of F3 families talk about and how F3 allows families to be involved on all levels.

As we continue to grow, we are planning to develop Juvenile Court supports as well as resources and supports in the school system.

Thank you F3 and the community for supporting our efforts to help families who are experiencing the same kinds of problems we have faced in our own families!

For information about how to access our family supports, please call Healthy Families Project at 441-3803.

Trish Blakely
Director,
Healthy Families Project



*"If you have
made mistakes,
even serious ones,
there is always
another chance
for you.
What we call
failure is not the
falling down,
but the staying
down."*

— Mary Pickford

Who Are The People We Serve and What Are The Outcomes?

By Mallie M. Moss
University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Who Are We Serving?

You may have wondered who are the children and families served by the F3 project. It should be no surprise to you that there is great diversity among the families and youth. By the end of August, there had been 179 individuals enrolled in the system, 124 of whom are participating in the evaluation. The average age of those enrolled in the system of care is 13, and almost two-thirds are male.

Families are referred to the F3 project from a variety of sources. The majority of youth come from the Schools and the Court System. The use of so many referral sources illustrates how the system of care is developing in Lancaster County.

Table 1:
Percentage of youth from each referral source

Schools	22%
Court	19%
Mental Health Agency	16%
Corrections	12%
Child Welfare	8%
Physical Health Agency	1%
Other (Family/Friends)	12%

Table 2 shows the racial breakdown of the youth involved in the F3 project. While the majority of youth are Caucasian, there are quite a few individuals from other races.

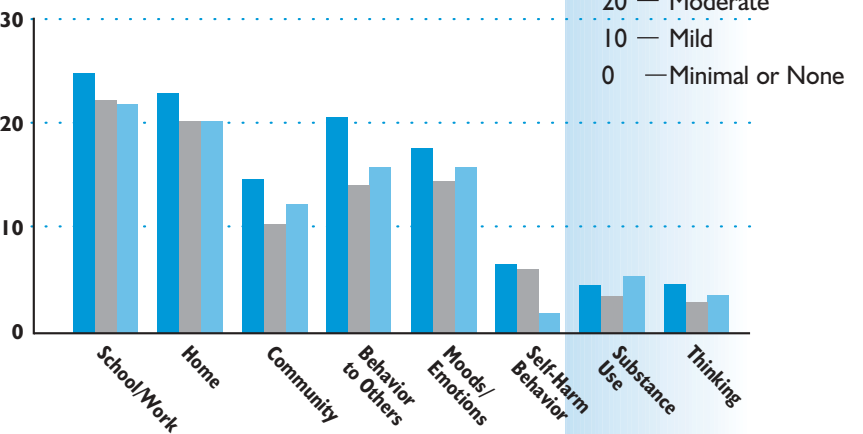
Table 1:
Percentage of youth from each racial/ethnic group

Caucasian	72%
Multiracial	6%
Hispanic	6%
African-American	5%
Native American	5%
Asian	2%
Other/Not Reported	4%

What Are the Outcomes?

One outcome measure is the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS). The CAFAS assesses how well the youth functions in a variety of settings (e.g. home, school) by having caregivers select behaviors that have occurred within a specified time period. The closer the score is to 30, the more severe the impairment.

As can be seen by Table 3, the average scores on each of the scales were reduced after six months in the F3 program. Seeing an initial (6 months) decrease in problems was significant. It suggests that children are benefiting from services. At 12-months, however, scores on several of the scales had slightly increased. It should be noted that for all but one of the scales, the increases were to levels that were lower than what was seen at intake. More importantly, the large decreases in problems in the areas of school/work and home had been maintained. Also one change that should be pointed out was the dramatic decrease in Self-Harm Behavior at the 12-month period. At 6-months, there had been only a minimal reduction in this behavior, but by 12-months, it was occurring very infrequently.



So what does all this mean? Basically, the youth are doing as we would have hoped and expected. The initial changes that were seen at the 6-month period show that the program is working as anticipated and the increases seen at 12-months suggest that the behaviors the youth are exhibiting are leveling out. We are hopeful that the gains that we have seen will be maintained over time.

"I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward."
— Thomas Edison

Table 3:
CAFAS Subscale Scores

TIMEFRAME:
■ Intake
■ 6 Months
■ 12 Months

KEY:
30 — Severe
20 — Moderate
10 — Mild
0 — Minimal or None



"This progress is the result of sitting down at the table together."



If you have comments or questions, call Henry Moss, Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator at 402.441.5678

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Families Inspiring Families (continued)

~ We emphasize the strengths of our families

The agenda each month includes time for the group to share information about the resources in the community for our families. April and May agendas included determining a name for the organization, mission statement, goals and interests.

The teams and the focus of each are as follows:

- ~ **The Family Involvement Team** – recruiting other families to join the organization
- ~ **The Program Team** – assisting the family organization in finding speakers, educational programs, and workshops
- ~ **"Fun with our Families" Team** – coordinating family activities throughout the year
- ~ **Respite Care Team** – discovering what services are available and what is needed
- ~ **Communication and Caring Team** – reaching out to one another for support and exchanging phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses
- ~ **Advocacy Team-Alert System** – creating a

calling/e-mail team to respond to family members of children with emotional disorders

- ~ **Mission Statement Team** – processing the comments, information, and ideas shared by others in the group to improve and enhance the mission statement

The July business meeting included a discussion about leadership and governance for Families Inspiring Families. We worked together in small groups and then brought the ideas back to the large group. We decided that a steering committee would be formed on a temporary basis. Seven individuals volunteered for that committee.

In lieu of an August meeting, "Fun with our Families" night was held at Pioneers Park on August 9th.

As our organization evolves and we discover the various ways that families can reach out to each other, we will emphasize a confidential, compassionate, and respectful environment where each individual member's voice and perspective is valued. We will help bring families together who share similar experiences as well as provide support and advocacy for them.

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